90th Anniversary of our
Avenues of Honour
Celebrating 25 years

Inaugural Chairperson and first Patron of the AGHS, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch generously offered Cruden Farm as a venue for commemorating the first 25 years of the Society with a tree-planting. Over 120 members from all states attended, among them many foundation members, past chairpersons, landscape designers – past and present – and botanical artists. Those present included Professor Catherin Bull, Mrs Margaret Darling, Mrs Grace Fraser, Mrs Malcolm Fraser, Mrs Jocelyn Mitchell, Mrs Jenny Phillips, Mrs Phyl Symons, the Countess of Wilton (Lady Ebury), and Mr Peter Watts.

Raffle Winner

After planting a Tilia, Dame Elisabeth drew the raffle for the trip to New Zealand donated by Mrs Julie Keegan and the winner was Mrs Eshuys of Alton, Mount Macedon.

New editor for Australian Garden History

The sub-committee responsible for selecting a new editor for the journal was delighted with the high standard of applicants and was unanimous in recommending the appointment of Tony Fawcett. A freelance journalist and editor, Tony had experience with Southdown Press before becoming editor-in-chief for Home Beautiful and Your Garden for eight years. Currently he produces the editorial (text and photos) for the official program for the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show. From his home in Gisborne South, Victoria, he edits several journals, has a well-established photo file and excellent contacts in the Horticultural Media Association (Victoria) being a past member of its executive team. Tony will take up his editorial responsibilities for AGHS from July this year.

Questionnaire responses

Sincere thanks to all those readers who returned the Membership Survey Questionnaire thus providing feedback for discussion and future planning by the NMC. The return was as follows: Overall 12% of total membership. Individual branch returns: ACT 11%, Sydney and Northern NSW 10%, Southern Highlands 6%, Queensland 19%, SA 10%, Tasmania 13%, Victoria 11%, WA 22%, Other 11%.

Sarah Lucas analysed the results and provided the following summary:

- The journal seems to be the most important part of belonging to AGHS, almost 100% saying they enjoyed it. Respondents were almost even in preferring a quarterly or 5 times per year publication. Half said they enjoyed local branch events, with one third attending the Annual Conference and one quarter buying specific publications.

- Most respondents felt they had opportunity to express views relevant to AGHS. About 75% were interested in day visits but well over half were also in favour of weekend visits and branch seminars. Contact with other members is seen as very important.
Advocacy work to protect historic gardens was important to almost all respondents.

Regarding the Annual Conference and AGM two thirds said they attended with the majority only attending occasionally.

In responding to the questions about *Studies In Australian Garden History* and the website most were aware of these, but few (25%) used the website. Just over half of respondents said they knew what the NMC does, 1/3 did not know.

The cost of membership, tours and events was considered reasonable by more than three quarters of those responding.

Half of the respondents were in favour of working bees saying they would attend a working bee in their branch area.

Less than 2/3 said they attended garden visits in their area and half attended visits outside their area. Half said would they go on an overseas tour and 1/3 would not.

Half of the respondents belonged to the National Trust and 1/3 to Friends of Royal Botanic Gardens.

Much useful detail was provided in the responses and state representatives will take this back to individual branches.

**Book winner**

The winner of the book, *The Naming of Names*, was Norah Killip of Parkville, Victoria.

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**Roadsides and Gardens**

**THE POST-CONFERENCE TOUR**

**WORDS & PICTURES: SUSAN REIDY**

As thoughts turn to the Annual National Conference Susan Reidy writes of pleasures past. This was the author's first post-conference tour; she hopes to participate in many more and encourages readers always to check the post-conference tour on offer each year.

Three days of brilliant weather and an unusually green spring landscape added lustre to the 2005 post-conference tour of Western Australia’s southwest corner.

**Day One: Amberley & Heronsbrook**

The Narrows Bridge took us out of Perth’s centre heading south through the suburbs. On Perth’s fringe, our leader (and Chair of the Conference Committee), John Viska, pointed to feral Arum Lilies along the road and declared, ‘You’ll be sick of them by the end of this trip’. We were. But John’s knowledge of what grew along the roadsides gave the tour a much appreciated depth. We were also privileged to have landscape designer Marion Blackwell touring with us, whose encyclopaedic plant knowledge was a boon.

Free of the city, the roadsides were lined with Marri (*Corymbia calophylla*) and Sheoak (*Allocasuarina fraseriana*). In this pasturale country, we saw a huge horse stud, the first of the trip’s many kinds of animal farming along the way like beef cattle, deer, sheep, alpaca and emus. We stopped at Entrance to the Cape Dutch garden at Voyager Estate winery, Margaret River, WA.
Southampton Homestead, Balingup, WA.

Harvey for the first of many cups of tea. This citrus and beef area is sustained by channel irrigation and is known as a childhood home of the Australian author May Gibbs. The Marri’s bold and curvaceous gumnuts (known locally as ‘honkey nuts’) may have inspired her ‘gumnut baby’ characters.

Along the Bussell Highway John pointed out Banksias, Jarrahs and Wattles, with Paperbarks in low-lying spots. The Margaret River area is dominated by the white limey Quindalup sands, one of three different sandy soils laid down along the southwestern coastal strip. We moved through the Ludlow Forest; it’s a large stand of Tuarts (Eucalyptus gomphocephala) interspersed with pine plantations (Pinus radiata and P. pinea). Lunch, and the first of several wine tastings, was at the Amberley Estate winery. Its garden gave us our first opportunity to notice local birds, among them what were either New Holland or White-cheeked Honeyeaters (without a ‘birdo’ in our party we couldn’t be sure). Western Rosellas rioted among the vines.

Our first garden visit was to Heronsbrook, a two-hectare property of native (and particularly Western Australian) plantings. Only seven years old, it’s a stunning valley garden, with a picturesque layout organised around two large dams. Its owners and designers, Michael and Mary McCall, maintain it without watering. It’s also surrounded by a ‘cat-proof’ fence to protect the ring-tailed possums they’ve introduced. Prominent plants are Grevilleas, Banksias and Hakeas.

The garden is notable for the happy, artful combinations of leaf forms and colours, particularly along the granite terraces. Michael told us that their plantings of rushes around the dams have brought them to life – attracting water hens, ducks and frogs.

We spent the night in Margaret River township, which is deep in Karri country. The Karri (Eucalyptus diversicolor) is one of the three tallest trees in the world (the other two are the Victorian mountain ash and the Californian redwood: there is debate about which is the tallest).

Day Two: Walcliffe House, Swallows, Voyager, Sunnyhurst

Next morning we took off for the garden of Walcliffe House, which lies on the banks of the Margaret River near its mouth. In the absence of owners Rose and Michael Chaney, the gardener, Colin Thompson, was our most informative host. On meeting the garden’s designer, Kate Hohnen (who was also travelling with us), Colin exclaimed, ‘Oh, you’re the one!’

This garden’s formality was in striking contrast to Heronsbrook (as was the coastal dune vegetation of Saltwater Paperbarks - Melaleuca cuticularis - surrounding Walcliffe). The garden wraps around the 1860s house made of limestone walls and a Sheoak shingle roof. The construction of a second house went on nearby unimpeded by this busload of garden enthusiasts.

Formal elements of Walcliffe include two very large topiary Olives marking the entrance, and terracing near the house with a central axis linking the veranda stairs and a large rectangular lawn.

The rest of the garden layout is structured around several old, large and weathered Peppermints (Agonis flexuosa), in full flower for our visit.

Of the garden’s sloping, riverbank landscape, Colin commented, ‘I was lucky enough to see the property from the air; when you are in the garden, you don’t realise how nestled into the landscape it is’. There is both old and new terracing; the older stonework has a beautiful grey, etched patina quite different from the creamy yellow
smoothness of the newer stone terraces. Eye-catching plants at Walcliffe included large old Agaves, Echiums and a Cape Lilac.

Still in the Margaret River area, our next stop was Swallows. We walked the kilometre-long drive of this 52 hectare farm, the home of botanical artist Pat Negus and her husband, farmer Tim Negus, whose three hectares of vines produced a most satisfactory wine tasting of cabernet sauvignon, merlot and cabernet franc.

The couple have built a number of mud-brick buildings using clay from the property. They provided us with a cup of tea and access to their charming garden, accompanied by a recording of Handel’s *Fitzwilliam Sonatas* while Pat showed us her artwork and Tim described his winemaking process - bliss! Pat was working on paintings for a new book on Fungi of the area.

Lunch was at Voyager Estate, the idiosyncratic winery of a wealthy mining magnate. The formal garden was designed some years previously by Marion Blackwell, who noted that the garden since then had ‘lost detail’ as the planting had been simplified. She also commented that her more typical garden designs tended to be more water wise. The garden (and winery architecture) is based on the Cape Dutch style of South Africa and features a ‘werf’ or walled garden divided formally into four quarters by pathways which lead visitors to the restaurant and tasting rooms.

As at Swallows, each row of grape vines has a white Rose at one end and a red Rose (here, the showy ‘Satchmo’) at the other. This tradition is a signalling system; insects eat the roses first, so telling the winemaker when to manage the vines to prevent infestation.

After an excellent lunch (and a glass of Voyager sauvignon blanc semillon), we took off down the Caves Road through 100-year-old regrowth Karris - the Leeuwin Boramup Forest - then we turned east to leave the coastal plain and head inland for Bridgetown.

The landscape changed as we travelled into the Darling Range along the Brockman Highway, through the Kingea Forest. Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*), Marri, Banksia and Sheoak are all here, along with a few ‘snotty gobbles’ (*Persoonia longifolia*). Local branch member Ann told us the latter are known as ‘geebung’ in NSW.

The most vivid display of colour along the roadside hit us as we neared Bridgetown. The road follows the course of the meandering Blackwood River, and its sides were carpeted in vivid masses of pink and orange Flame Peas (*Chorizema cordatum*) and bright Blue Leschenaultia (*Leschenaultia biloba*).

We enjoyed the end of daylight on the outskirts of Bridgetown in the garden of Sunnyhurst, a hilltop house (c.1899) with two huge old Washington Palms (*Washingtonia filifera*) in its front garden and a big old Moreton Bay fig (*Ficus macrocarpa*) on the side. The house verandas were wrecked by a cyclone in 1968 but all has been restored. Our host, Laine Staniford, said the garden is ‘lots of fun’. It’s a very peaceful, large suburban garden with 600 rosebushes and a one-hectare vineyard with six grape varieties - another opportunity to taste some wine, courtesy of Mark Staniford.

**Day Three: Montaza, Bella Vista, Southampton & Vision Splendid**

On Thursday morning we visited two more Bridgetown gardens. Montaza has a large Lemon-scented Gum planted in 1916, the same age as the weatherboard house as are a small orchard and a camellia hedge. Owner Peta Townsing told us, ‘In honour of your visit, the Lilac has come out today’. In this sloping hillside garden, three young Almond trees provide nuts for parrots, there are Roses, a ‘Maple Terrace’ and many Western Australian natives, which were a feature of all the gardens we saw.

Bella Vista had an entirely different character,
partly because of its location on the banks of the Blackwood River. Merle and Tony Davis welcomed us to this varied garden with its 100-year-old Rose garden in the centre of the circular drive, an old Monterey Pine with gnarled buttressing at the base of the trunk, a sculpture garden and a vegetable garden contained within Tamarisk hedges.

The 1909 brick and stone house is of interest architecturally, not least because it has names carved into the vermiculation of the stone quoins surrounding the door and window frames along the veranda. Here we sat and enjoyed home-made fruitcake and another cup of tea on this cool, pleasant morning.

Host Tony Davis told us that the river water is brackish as it runs past the property, a result of its journey through Western Australia’s eastern wheat belt, where it becomes contaminated with fertilizers and salts.

We left Bridgetown, turned north, through Greenbushes (an old tin mining town) and Jarrah trees growing in the gravelly laterite soil, along with native Clematis in bloom, and eventually to Southampton Homestead at Balingup for lunch, provided by hosts Les and Lynn Nunn, served on the gently sloping lawn that runs down to the Blackwood River. This peaceful, pleasant garden, with its simple 1862 house (restored under the control of a conservation management plan) included three large Oaks near the driveway, nearly 150 years old.

Southampton was Western Australia’s biggest wine producer in the 19th century. The property was very productive, with many buildings; Lynn told us it was ‘quite a village’. The Nunns have planted a hectare of wine vines as a salute to Southampton’s history. The new part of the garden features a sweet herbaceous-bordered path and rectangular raised vegetable plots in the lawn. John Viska contributed to the new garden design.

After this lazy lunch, we were off to the Vision Splendid Gardens at Waroona – via Mullalup (where the Horta Nursery operated from the early 1900s to the 1940s), Kirup, Donnybrook (apple country), Boyanup, Dardanup, along the Waterloo Road and up the South Western Highway.

The Vision Splendid Gardens are a late 20th century version of the older tea garden or pleasure garden form. Bonny and Ed Brookes established them in the 1970s on their farm and our hosts, Carol and Howard Baker, now operate the 4.3-hectare gardens. Among the features - notably a scale version of the Sydney Harbour Bridge that takes you over a large lily pond – were a Jarrah tree in flower and a big Marri: John Viska told me that its size indicated great age, so it would be reasonable to assume it was original to the site.

And that was it really! A quick survey down the back of the bus on the way back to Perth brought forth a few highlights of the trip: the ‘wonderful’ Moreton Bay Fig at Sunnyhurst in Bridgetown, because it withstood the cyclone; lunch at Southampton Homestead, both for its peacefulness and for its age and significance; Walcliffe House because of the relationship between the house and the river; and the Australian plant garden at Heronsbrook, because of the ‘light touch’. Heronsbrook was this writer’s favourite also, because I’m always a sucker for artfulness in the plantings.

What a splendid three days - John and Marion were fonts of knowledge, and never in my life have I found roadsides so beguiling. It is this very interpretation that makes us join AGHS events; an opportunity to see the countryside in a new way, and to appreciate the enthusiastic labours of garden lovers.

Susan Reidy is editor of the University of Melbourne Library Journal. She has a postgraduate degree in architectural history, an enduring passion, to which she has now added an enthusiasm for garden history.
Queen Elizabeth II officially opened Carrick Hill for the public at an afternoon garden party on Sunday 9 March 1986. This was a new beginning for Sir Edward and Lady Hayward’s home already accustomed during the Haywards’ time, to hosting celebrities and cultural identities. The couple had jointly agreed that Carrick Hill would be gifted after their deaths to the people of South Australia. The bequest included the house, 40 hectares of grounds and their valuable collection of art, furniture and other antiques. This still ranks as one of the most generous gifts of public benefaction in our nation’s history and provides a unique glimpse into the lifestyle of a cultured and wealthy couple in the mid-twentieth century. Up until now, the unique hillside garden created by Ursula Hayward in the late 1930s has received modest attention from garden historians. These essays aim to present an analysis of the influences at work on Ursula and her team of gardeners, specifically that of the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain during the early part of the twentieth century. Of particular importance is a portrait of Ursula Hayward and how she used her garden to express her passion for flowers.
Springfield Real Estate Company’s plan from their 1928 prospectus showing the location and setting in the foothills to the south of the city. ‘Birdegate’ Ursula Hayward’s home was in Glen Osmond the next hill’s face suburb to the east.

Aerial photographs from 1949 & 1969. South Australian Government surveys are important research tools in the

My thanks go to Trevor Nottle for his advice and contribution, Jenny and Christopher Legoe for access to family photographs, Tony Whitehill, Dr Christine Garnaut and Liz Trabilsie for sharing their knowledge.

Carrick Hill Trust acknowledges the financial support of the Carrick Hill Development Foundation in the production of this booklet.

Richard Heathcote
Director Carrick Hill Trust
The garden style and its features

In 1937, a hundred years after Colonel William Light began laying out his plan for the city of Adelaide, Edward and Ursula Hayward were at work with architect James Irwin, planning Carrick Hill, their house and garden in the foothills to the south of the now well-established city. The entrance to number 46 Fullarton Road with its pair of cast iron gates hung from gateposts and walls of local stone gives no hint of what lies beyond. The carriage drive climbs gently, then follows the contour roughly 155 metres above sea level. It is lined unevenly with oleanders and stone pines as it snakes its way along the half-kilometre approach.

Carrick Hill is a suburban home, but there is nothing in the least ordinary about it – although it resists ostentation in its borrowings from other styles and idioms. The dramatic hillside location required skillful handling to place the house in the best aspect, both for views from its interiors and for the first glimpse of the house when approaching by car or on foot.

As the visitor crosses the babbling rill with its rusticated stone bridge, the artifice of the inner garden begins – with no hint of its origins as a humble dry creek. The dry stone walling continues as the terrace beds of the turnaround come into view, creating a floral amphitheatre for the display of herbaceous plants and shrubs. Two great Bunya Bunya pines stand like sentries on the terracing. Here the great cypress hedge begins, enclosing the inner garden and separating it from the utility areas of citrus orchards, picking and productive gardens.

The car turnaround at the front door uses large slabs of Mintaro slate set irregularly in turf, providing a gentler surface than the white pebble shingle of the drive and is a subtle contrast to the Basket Range stone of the house (south east façade). Planted in the teardrop island are a rare standard Hawthorn and a pair of weeping silver birches providing shade for seats. At the far end is the striking life-size bronze sculpture, *Mother and Child*, by Sir Jacob Epstein, declaring the Haywards’ interest in twentieth-century British modern art.

![Drawing of Carrick Hill garden by Rodney Beams first published in Some Historic Gardens of South Australia by RO Beams and JA Whitehill 1981](image-url)
Why a manor house garden?

The young couple had honeymooned in England during 1936 and the Barr Smiths (Ursula's family) had made the Gatehouse, a property they owned in the southern county of Sussex, available to them. Close by near Burwash was Batemans, Rudyard Kipling's home and the quintessential Jacobean manor house much admired by Ursula and Edward. The fact that they chose this style of architecture for their own home and acquired the windows, staircase, oak panelling and doors from a demolished country house in Staffordshire expresses something more than enthusiasm. It ties in with the cult of the Old English manor house and castle that arose at the beginning of the century in the Cotswolds and the West Country and was often illustrated in Country Life magazine. Another feature of this trend was the work of the owner in remaking the house and the garden with perhaps help but not leadership from architects and professional landscapers.

It is likely that Ursula Hayward's extensive library held a copy of Gertrude Jekyll and Lawrence Weaver's influential book, Gardens for Small Country Houses, which provided readers with such advice as: 'It is upon the right relationship of the garden to the house that its value and the enjoyment that is to be derived from it depends'. Although a fire in 1958 destroyed a substantial part of her library at Carrick Hill, the hundred or so surviving gardening books included influential works such as The Formal Garden in England by Reginald Blomfield and F Inigo Thomas and On the Making of Gardens by Sir George Sitwell.

Manner of life

Ursula Hayward selected specific aspects characteristic of a manor house garden to be part of her garden. Her choices included references to Tudor and Stuart garden-making such as a cellular structure for the garden using hedges, lawn terracing, stone paving and the utilisation of local materials. Also essential to a manor house garden were a love of old plant types and a suspicion of superfluous decoration and 'prettiness'. In our research into the garden features which had disappeared from the garden we found stored in a gardener's shed the original oak door for the Tudor archway, a lead urn planter and the original sundial (motto on base: "We are each travelling towards his sunset"), all standard items for a manor house garden. Other treasures in the store were a collection of the original gardener's tools, including a mighty dibber for bulb planting, wooden handled forks and spades and several pairs of worn hedging shears.

Salubrious suburbs

To the east, following the great hedge around, we approach the tradesman's entrance and service area. Here are large trees: an unidentified pear tree and English oaks providing shade and scale to this side of the house. Below the service area with its garages lies the Alister Clark Rose Garden established in 1990, where previously citrus orchards had been planted in symmetric rows on the slope down to Rectory Walk along the north boundary. In the time of the Haywards this area was enclosed for the laundry drying area. To the east is the service entrance on to Meadowvale Road in the salubrious suburb of Springfield. Beyond the shelter belt of native pines and sugar gums we encounter this 1920s upmarket real estate scheme that took its lead from the Garden City Suburb movement, a product of the Arts and Crafts philosophy during the twentieth century. This movement was more directly expressed through town planner, Charles Reade's initiative for Mitcham Garden Suburb, later to become Colonel Light Gardens, and the building of a thousand homes for returned servicemen in the 1920s. These two garden-focused developments in adjoining suburbs highlight two areas of interest in the era in which Ursula Hayward was designing her garden: first of all, Adelaide from the outset had been a place where gardens were valued as an integral part of the home and its environs. Secondly, Adelaide looked to the English tradition for its models, and the Haywards were intensely British in their taste and style.

Mother and Child 1911 by Jacob Epstein is a striking life-size bronze sculpture placed close to the front door. Another sculpture of the same scale, Female Nude by Alistair Smart, was located on the west end of the terrace.
Queen Elizabeth II visited Adelaide for South Australia's sesquicentenary in 1986 and as part of the celebrations officially opened Carrick Hill to the public. John Bannen the then Premier also attended.

Cliff Jacobs worked for the Haywards for 47 years and was one of three full-time gardeners. It was his job to trim the several hundred metres of hedge surrounding the formal gardens.

The Haywards had many artists as friends and they often stayed at Carrick Hill. Sydney Ure Smith made these watercolours during his stay in 1946: Entrance Front and Garden Front. (Hayward Bequest)
Out of time out of place

Passing through a Tudor-style doorway in a stone wall we arrive at the top terrace with its repeat use of slate slabs set in grass. Here, awaiting us, are panoramic views of the Gulf of St Vincent and the Adelaide plains. The three descending lawn terraces lead down via paved steps to the pleached pear arbour, an unusual feature in Australia and probably inspired by the Batemans garden in Sussex. At the end of the arbour is a dramatic narrow slit a metre wide in the four-metre high hedge, allowing the visitor to pass out of the inner garden and follow the downhill path of Rectory Walk. The perimeter hedge has three archways and two slits for entry or exit to the inner garden from the grounds, each adding to the charm and sense of discovery the garden offers.

Gardens of repose or anyone for tennis?

Tucked away on either side of the arbour and enclosed by the cypress hedge are the flower gardens where Ursula grew roses and bulbs amongst flowering crab apples, and experimented with herbaceous borders. These were informal gardens, asymmetrical with changing layouts: the east side almost square and enclosed, the west side being steeper and sloping, dissected by a path to the lawn tennis court.

Although Edward Hayward had been a tennis blue from St Peter's College, a lawn tennis court was nevertheless a standard social facility for large upper-class Australian homes of the 1920s and 1930s. Carrick Hill's tennis court fits with ease into the garden scheme and emphasises the expansiveness of the site. A dry stone retaining wall faces the ledge of the terrace, below which are rose beds and descending slate steps into the grounds beyond.

And so to the cypress terrace, which continues the scheme of four descending lawn terraces between the hedge and the dramatic dry stone wall beds lining the banks of the rill. This area has a distinct Italianate feel created by the five pairs of descending cypresses, each now some ten metres tall. Two features distinguish the top terrace: a castellated hedge of ivy and plantings of old rose varieties, the latter providing scent and colour for the visitor approaching along the carriage drive.

What has changed and what has stayed the same?

Sadly, the poplar and cedar walk leading from the bottom of the cypress terraces has only one of each tree surviving where once dozens ran down the hillside in an avenue from the grounds beyond the inner garden. Efforts to replant this feature have not been successful. Instead, two ponds, the larger one fed by a bore, have extended the Hayward's original modest water feature and enable the rill to run continuously. In the eastern grounds an orchard of seventy trees of antique apple varieties has been established in place of the citrus groves. A further addition originating from the original owners' interest in outdoor sculpture is the Carrick Hill Trust's sculpture collection placed around the grounds. This Australian collection includes works by Arthur Boyd, Robert Klippel, Lenton Parr and Inge King, as well as local sculptors, such as Neil Cranney and Greg Johns.

The outer garden planned on the English country park model features clumps of trees, including hawthorns, quinces, medlars and nut trees. Shelter belts of pines and gums, a grove of olives along the west perimeter and on the other slopes, crepe myrtles, Irish strawberries, and a Moreton Bay fig. It is an eclectic mix of plants and one which continues to survive in heavy clay soils on an Adelaide hillside in hot dry South Australian summers a long way from Sussex.

Richard Heathcote
Director, Richard Heathcote, believes Carrick Hill to be one of Australia's most important twentieth-century gardens displaying the Hayward's eclectic taste and desire to reflect English traditions in laying out their hillside home.

(Photo: Actual Eyes - Andrew Weller)

The pleached pear arbour in blossom during early spring. Pleaching refers to the intertwining of branches to provide a covered walk way and was a favoured garden feature in Elizabethan times.

(Photo: Michelle Hart)

The Weeping Rose by Pierre-Joseph Redoute c.1830 Watercolour and The White Lily from Robert Thornton's Temple of Flora 1800 Aquatint, are from Ursula Hayward's collection of floral subject prints demonstrating the depth of her interest in this genre. (Hayward Bequest)
Ursula Hayward and her flowers

Ursula Barr Smith, the youngest child of one of Australia’s wealthiest families, raised in town and country homes set amid large Victorian gardens, surrounded indoors by botanically patterned wallpapers and swagged flowery textiles designed by William Morris & Co., would surely have loved flowers from an early age. When she married Edward Hayward in 1935 and eventually set up her own household at Carrick Hill, what evidence is there of the significance flowers had in her life?

Even as she grew up, she would have experienced the excitement of her older siblings as they married, built new homes and made gardens, chatting with them about the requirements of home-building, of architects, furniture, domestic arrangements, entertaining, garden-making and fulfilling the life expected of them by family and society.

From the evidence of household accounts and papers and the visual records of the garden, it is possible to conclude with some confidence that Ursula Hayward primarily saw herself as an artist, an artist who drew particular pleasure from painting flowers. With considerable enthusiasm she marshalled significant resources to construct an artistic ambience for herself at Carrick Hill. First, with her husband Bill, she made a very comfortable house, a house compliant with the general Arts and Crafts sympathies of her family, but with subtle indications that she was making her own statement about the life she intended to live and the lifestyle she intended to create. She enjoyed the indulgence of having household and garden staff, of stepping out to pick large baskets of flowers daily, and she enjoyed arranging them for the house. Ursula loved scented flowers – tuberoses, belladonnas – pink and white, paper-white jonquils, and roses and lilies, in particular. She loved the bold shapes and gaudy colours of Bird-of-Paradise and bougainvillea and the soft pale-pink clouds of crab apple and tamarisk. How she must have delighted in being surrounded by the orange groves of Springfield House when her own house was newly built. How she must have missed the all-pervading perfume as the trees slowly died out or were removed for stables and pony fields.

In her library were books on flower arranging by Constance Spry, a London florist, who instituted a style of floristry that incorporated flowering branches, fruits, berries, hips and haws, seed heads and pods, cones, sprays of roses, gourds, succulents, large leaves and grasses displayed in a range of choice containers – most often antique alabaster urns and tazzas, fine porcelain and glass, Bible boxes, old silver, brass and pewter. In fact it was she who created the floral component of the English Country House style. Spry was an influence who contributed to Ursula Hayward’s vision of herself as an artist; arranging the flowers was about shape, form, colour, texture, composition and letting the flowers speak for themselves – a far cry from the fussy epergnes of hard-wired carnations and asparagus fern of her parents’ and grand-parents’ eras. There was even the addition of a small bird’s nest or some pretty shells from time to time to add country charm to the arrangements. At Carrick Hill no room was made for potted palms or sword ferns.

In her own quiet, determined way Ursula was making a break with her conservative aristocratic background and moving forward into a world of self-expression and creativity. While not at all Bohemian, she was more attuned to the lifestyle favoured by the Bloomsbury set than to the grander traditions of ‘Establishment’ society. Ursula stretched the respectability of the ‘squattocracy’ by determining to achieve a kind of eclecticism less wild than that of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, not as aesthetic as Sackville-West or as grand as Nancy Lancaster, but perhaps more akin to that of Norah Lindsay, Sybil Colefax and John Fowler. She chose a style midway between the boundaries of Establishment convention and the freer, more comfortable Bohemianism that enabled an exploration of self. Both she and her husband Bill enjoyed the lifestyle their wealth allowed without feeling overwhelmed by the social responsibilities so keenly felt by earlier generations. This easy association with wealth was perfectly reflected in the balance between social responsibility and personal freedom that was integral to the English Country House style.
Robert and Joanna Barr Smith, Ursula’s grandparents, both keen gardeners, photographed at Auchendarroch, their summer hill station at Mount Barker. Ursula loved dogs and kept Great Danes at Carrick Hill. (Photo: Molly Barr Smith, courtesy Legoe family)

Ursula was very close to Tom, her immediate older brother. They grew up together at Birksgate and later were travelling companions in Europe when Tom was at Cambridge. (Photo: Molly Barr Smith, courtesy Legoe family)

Ursula Hayward in the early 1950s when she was appointed to the board of the Art Gallery of South Australia, the first female trustee in Australia.

Edward ‘Bill’ Hayward rose to the rank of Lt Colonel in WW II having been one of the ‘Rats of Tobruk’ and also serving in the Pacific. (Hayward Bequest)
Ursula Hayward and her flowers

Ursula had three uses for her garden at Carrick Hill: the provision of flowers for the house and for painting, for strolling in quietude with a dog, and for entertaining. The first two of these can be viewed as personal choices about how she lived her life, and the other was a concession to her high position in society. A skilled and gracious hostess, she enjoyed a good party and stimulating company, but all the evidence suggests she preferred to spend her time developing her artistic talent.

It is difficult to estimate just how much of a gardener Ursula was. She definitely loved flowers, but did she get her hands dirty, and did she know her plants? As much as we might like being able to view her as an Antipodean Victoria Sackville-West, it seems more likely that she relied on professional help. Architects and engineers most certainly devised the massive terraces and turning circle that had to be in place before the house could be constructed on the cut-and-filled site. Siting the house would have been the domain of the architect, as would have the extensive stone terracing. The crazy paving of the drive and turning circle was a marked departure from the conventional rolled gravel of the day and could now be interpreted as another sign of Ursula positioning herself in ‘artistic’ circles. The bulwark hedges and long avenues of poplars and Himalayan Deodars were also set out early in the scheme and may well have been part of the architect’s plan. After all, it was the period when the rule of architects over gardens and landscape was being challenged by designers and gardeners; perhaps here the architect was stamping his authority on the site by extending his vision for the house into the garden?

It is pure speculation to ponder on the role that other pastoral, polo and racing families may have played in the development of Ursula’s ideas about gardening. She doubtlessly knew and mixed with them as members of her social set, and in all probability visited their country places: Collingrove, Hughes Park, Hill River Station, Anlaby, Glenalta and numerous others. She may even have been familiar with the country estates of similar families in Victoria and New South Wales as a result of travelling with her husband to buy horses or play polo. Seeing these large established gardens at Carrick Hill, we can but wonder about the origins of their bulwark hedges, expansive vistas, rose gardens, orchards, cut flower gardens and the like.

For the flowering plants that filled in the finer detail of the garden, Ursula relied on a staff of gardeners, although she undoubtedly loved working alongside them among the flowers, eagerly pointing out those she wanted for the house and for her paintings, but perhaps not getting her fingernails too dirty or chipped, just in case such unladylike appearances were noticed at the cocktail hour.

Her enthusiasm for flowers could easily be supplemented if her requirements were not available from her own garden. As patroness of many garden clubs and plant societies, she would have been presented with flowers and flowering plants. It seems these were added to the floral bounty of the interior of Carrick Hill. If she liked them sufficiently, more could be ordered and planted for flowering another year. If plants died, well, they died. Perhaps like many gardeners, she persisted with a few special favourites. Camellias and cymbidium orchids come to mind; the former miffy because of the exposed site and rotten soil, the latter difficult even for professional gardeners more accustomed to hedge trimming, rose pruning and lawn mowing.

Was Ursula Hayward a plantswoman? The garden as it presents itself suggests not. Otherwise it would be reasonable to expect a much greater use of resources and contacts to locate examples of the many dry-growing and Mediterranean-type plants that would have made her garden greener. She was content with her park and cutting gardens. Although there are examples of hawthorns, almonds, medlars, olives and, of course, the Pear Walk, in the grounds there’s no real sense of their being massed or laid out in order to make the park more garden-like. There is certainly no evidence that she was a collector of plants.

Whatever her degree of engagement with her garden, there can be no doubt that the artist within Ursula Hayward carried a strong instinct that flowers were a primary source of inspiration and creativity.

Trevor Nottle
Ursula as a seven-year-old photographed by her teenage sister, Molly, amongst the lilyum beds at Birksgate. Lilies of all kinds were to feature strongly in the plantings at Carrick Hill and the library has many books on these favourite flowers.

"She is a plain child but a face full of wit and wickedness. She will be something in the world I am sure."

Joanna Barr Smith, Ursula’s Grandmother, from a letter to her husband, 26 April 1908.

Sunflowers oil on canvas by Ursula Hayward undated. Artist Magaria Stipnieks recalls at the painting sessions she was employed to attend, that the flowers were already selected and cut from the gardens by Ursula than skilfully arranged before she arrived. From the 1940s English author and flower arranging doyen Constance Spry changed the approach to floral decoration in homes using innovative vessels to enliven interior spaces. Several of her books are in Ursula’s library. (Hayward Bequest)

Flowers and Roof Tops oil on canvas by Sir Stanley Spencer 1938. Of the nine works by Spencer in the Haywards’ collection seven focus on flowers and landscape in their composition. Floral paintings by other British, French and Australian artists also feature strongly as well as prints and books on botanical subjects. (Hayward Bequest)
Like most publicly owned heritage gardens, Carrick Hill has a full suite of conservation and landscape management plans to assist the Carrick Hill Trust in its policy and decision-making relating to the garden. Furthermore, since the early 1980s, the Garden and Grounds Sub-Committee has supported the Director and the gardening team with advice on horticultural matters and landscape-management issues.

The appointment of Richard Heathcote as Director at the end of 2004 heralded a new direction for Carrick Hill: the garden and grounds of the heritage site were to become the particular focus of attention. Richard Heathcote had previously worked at Rippon Lea Estate in Victoria and had been involved in the extensive restoration of its garden. Although Carrick Hill already enjoyed a wide reputation for its art collection and historic house interiors, the Trust wished to extend its appeal beyond the established audience and believed that the garden arts and enjoyment of the landscape represented the next direction to be taken. The flora and fauna of the Grey Box bushland on the hill behind the property is also to be interpreted and integrated as part of the Carrick Hill experience.

Three projects are currently in progress to attract a new generation of visitors. The remaking of Lady Hayward’s Flower Gardens either side of the pleached pear arbour will appeal to garden lovers. The original gardens had not been kept up after Ursula Hayward’s death in 1970 and the Trust replanted them with display beds of hybrid tea roses for the opening in 1986. These intimate gardens of repose will include the original configurations of herbaceous borders and informal mixed plantings amongst crab apples, flowering quinces and hawthorns. Features will include seats, a sundial, sculptures and a shady bower.

For the environment-conscious visitor, Carrick Hill’s policy of waterwise gardening will be of some interest. Through capture and storage of storm water and ground water run-off, Carrick Hill aims to be water-self-sufficient by 2010. Public education programs will be available via website and on-site activities will be a major component of this project.

The Children’s Literary Trail is designed for families and comprises a series of landscape features inspired by children’s stories. Stage one has three locations on a half-kilometre walking trail on the eastern edge of the grounds: the Hobbit House (JR Tolkien), the Secret Garden (Frances Hodgson Burnett) and the Jungle Book (Rudyard Kipling). The selection of these authors reflects the Haywards’ strong interest in British culture. Stage two will focus on Australian stories and involve Mem Fox as advisor, the May Gibbs Literary Foundation and an Indigenous component. As well as the landscape features, interactive elements to the trail will encourage exploration and discovery of the natural world.

A team of three professional gardeners maintain Carrick Hill garden, with valuable support from a weekly group of volunteers. Strong links have also been established with Urrbrae TAFE whose horticultural students are provided with regular placements in the gardens. Thanks to the passion and commitment of these three groups and under the inspiring leadership of Gardens Manager Liz Trabilsie, the gardens and grounds have flourished and have become justly acknowledged as one of the finest public gardens in Australia.
Winston Churchill once said of Russia 'It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma'. When it comes to researching many of the historic gardens in Australia the same could be said. Gostwyck, near Uralla, in Northern New South Wales is just one example.

The exact origins of this large country garden remain a mystery. A few tantalising photos taken in the early 1900s show not one but two verdant gardens. Now the lower garden has disappeared, except for some magnificent trees and some stone features. To date, no written history of the garden has been found and the details which follow are based on oral stories and recollections, dating back to the 1940s.

The property, Gostwyck, was first taken up by the English free settler, Edward Gostwyck Cory, probably sometime in the late 1820s. He built a simple cottage homestead on the eastern bank of Salisbury Waters and Cory's second name, Gostwyck, remains as the property name and as his memorial.

The property was bought by Henry Dangar in 1834 and subsequently transferred to Dangar Bros and over the years workers' cottages, woolshed and other essential buildings were built creating a village atmosphere. Dangar descendants still own the property today. In the 1850s A. A. Dangar decided to move across to the other side of the creek for easier access to nearby Uralla, when the creek flooded. He built the homestead on a commanding position high above Salisbury Waters and generations of owners extended the house with additions being made up until the 1930s.

In 1856 the distinctive avenue of elms was started and this would seem to indicate the beginning of the gardens as well. Early records show one William Cattle (or possibly Capple) recorded as the gardener in 1863 on a salary of 39 pounds a year but there are no records or photos to show his labours. The steep slope down to the river was terraced with extensive dry stone walls, terminating in three broad sets of steps along the bottom of the slope. The terraces were edged with generous perennial beds. A very substantial stone pergola was built. All that stone work remains and the pergola is now smothered in ancient wisteria vines.

The pergola provided a link between the top gardens and the extensive and elaborate garden beds which were established on the banks of Salisbury Waters. There was also a gravel road running north-south across the garden between the pergola and the garden beds, and this was used for easy access for the gardeners.
Many magnificent specimen trees, particularly elms and oaks, were planted at the same time as the avenue. Originally the river was crossed by stepping stones which were to be replaced by a magnificent suspension bridge erected by the Clyde Engineering Company in the early 1900s. This was reportedly erected to provide easier access for the huge flocks of sheep to cross over to the woolshed which had remained on the eastern side of the creek. That woolshed is now part of the neighbouring property Deeargee.

By the turn of the century early photographs indicate a showcase garden consisting of a very large orchard, a huge vegetable garden and a flower garden with massed plantings of annuals and bulbs. Whole beds were dedicated to displays of particular plants including gladioli, tulips, dahlias and pansies. Two long pine hedges edged either side of the garden at the north and south ends and provided essential shelter. Some members of families who grew up in the garden particularly remember the scent of the pine hedges and of rosemary, mint and the many red currant bushes. They say that the gardens were always immaculate. Numerous pheasants were caged throughout the garden.

Former manager, Trevor Robinson, started at Gostwyck as a young jackaroo in 1945 and he remembers there was a team of gardeners employed at that time. However over the years the upkeep proved too costly, both economically and time wise, and the bottom gardens were gradually removed by the time Trevor retired as Manager in the 1980s. Today the wisteria-clad pergola leads into a paddock of long grass with a number of magnificent specimen elms and oaks being all that remains of the original lower garden.

The upper gardens surrounding the house are still beautifully planted and maintained and the borders overflow with roses and perennials. The sunken garden, with a stunning stone surround to the pond beside the house, was formerly a tennis court. The bulb bank is still a magnificent sight in spring with thousands of daffodils flowering under the bare tracery of the huge elms.

The garden at Gostwyck shows strong evidence of professional design but to date no records of a designer have been found. Like all great puzzles the history of Gostwyck is not yet complete and several key pieces remain to be found, but the sense of history and tranquillity will always remain.

Acknowledgements
My thanks go to the Attard family, to Sally and Owen Croft, Barbara Giblin, Arnold Good and to Trevor and Peter Robinson who provided much information for the Gostwyck story.

A request
Since I started researching this garden many pieces of the jigsaw have been supplied. If any reader can supply any more pieces please write to me: Lynne Walker, Box 984, Armidale, NSW 2350.

Lynne Walker is an active committee member of the Northern New South Wales sub-branch of AGHS. A keen gardener she is a regional co-ordinator for the Australian Open Garden Scheme.
REMEMBERED GARDENS: EIGHT WOMEN GARDENERS & THEIR VISIONS OF THE AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPE

Holly Kerr Forsyth
Miegunyah Press, 2006
ISBN 0522-85243-2
RRP: $49.95 but see special AGHS offer leaflet enclosed with this issue of journal.

Reviewed by Trevor Nottle

In this refreshing view of Australian garden history Holly Kerr-Forsyth presents eight women gardeners, each one representing a slice of our history at different points in time - from the Second Fleet arrival of Elizabeth MacArthur to Kath Carr of the current era. Feminists may take heart at this particular line of research but more than anything the subjects chosen for inclusion represent the spirit of their times and a strong streak of self-determination and individualism, characteristics which surely set them on history's page more than their gender.

Elizabeth MacArthur, Georgiana Molloy, Louisa Anne Meredith, Una Faulkner, Winifred West, Beatrice Bligh, Edna Walling and Kath Carr provide an appealing cross-section of women gardeners who are sensitively dealt with in a manner that is carefully balanced so that the well-known, such as Walling, are counterpoised and set in context by less well-known but equally impressive characters. This is a very attractive feature of the author's treatment of her subjects. It gets away from the star system that rules the popular imagination and suggests the value of a more considered, long distance perspective.

Although adapted from a PhD thesis, Remembered Gardens is eminently readable and, while detailed and thorough, is not pedantic. Unlike many books nowadays the illustrations are not the most significant part of the book, instead they serve to support the text, a feature that at first glance is somewhat disconcerting. It is not until the text is read that a reader can understand why pictures of Anglo-European gardens are liberally juxtaposed with those of Australian gardens.

Highly recommended for gardeners, and for those who enjoy a good read and some history.

CAN YOU HELP?

ASSISTANCE WANTED WITH THE AGHS WEBSITE

The AGHS office is seeking a volunteer to prepare updates to its website on a monthly basis. This task currently takes approximately 4 hours per month. Technical knowledge of website maintenance is required however a basic knowledge of and access to the internet is essential. A willingness to liaise with the Executive Officer, the Editor and the Branches is necessary. We are hoping that the member who indicated on the recent survey that they had website skills contacts us about this volunteer position. Interested persons please call 03 9650 5043 or email Jackie Courmadias, info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au.
RECHERCHE BAY

All historians and particularly garden historians are delighted that the north-east peninsula of Recherche Bay, threatened by logging, has been bought by the not-for-profit Tasmanian Land Conservancy from Robert and David Vernon for $2.21 million.

This was possible through the donation of $2 million by Dick Smith and his wife Pip together with publicity and advocacy by Greens Senator Bob Brown and many conservation groups including AGHS which has donated $2,000.

The site is significant as a landfall of French scientific expeditions in 1792 and 1793 and an attempt to establish a garden. Local historian Bruce Poulson believes that 'if felling had occurred all signs of French occupation would have been obliterated.'

Senator Brown described the saving of Recherche Bay 'as a road leading to joy, honour, inspiration and reconciliation.'

ANOTHER HONOUR

A third member of AGHS received an Australia Day honour and that was Dr Peter Kaleski of Wahroonga who was awarded the OAM for services to dentistry. The editor apologises for missing this honour and thanks Sarah Lucas for drawing attention to the omission.

THANKS

Our thanks go to Di Ellerton, Fran Faul, Jane Johnson, Laura Lewis, Sandi Pullman, Ann Rayment, Susan Reidy, Georgina Whitehead and Kathy Wright for packing the last issue of the journal.

Mailbox

From:
Jerry Coleby-Williams Dip. Hort. (Kew), RHS, NEBSM, MAIH
Director, Seed Savers’ Foundation & Presenter, ABC ‘Gardening Australia’

3 March, 2006

Dear Editor,

Re: The Naming of Names, review p. 20, Australian Garden History, Feb-April 2006.

This book makes no reference to Raunkier, a flaw in an otherwise well researched work. Linnaeus, as to be expected, gets good coverage. It’s a shame your otherwise good review didn’t mention this.

Regards,

Jerry

Christen C. Raunkjær (1860-1938) was a Danish botanist. Born Christen Christiansen he took the name Raunkjær from the farm on which he was born. He graduated in botany in 1885 becoming scientific assistant at the Copenhagen Botanical Garden and the Botanical Museum 1893-1911 during which time he made a study tour to the Danish West Indies (now Virgin Islands) and St Domingo 1905-06, and to Italy, North Africa, Spain and Southern France 1909-10. Raunkjær was Professor of Botany at the University of Copenhagen from 1912 to 1923.

In 1934 Oxford University Press published his work The Life Forms of Plants and Statistical Plant Geography which set out a system of categorising plants using subdivisions based on the location of the plant’s growth point (bud) during seasons with adverse conditions (cold seasons, dry seasons).

Anna Pavord’s ‘Chronology’ (pp. 405-416) in The Naming of Names shows that she confined her work to the period between 387 BC, when Plato founded the Academy, and 1753, when Linnaeus’s Species plantarum was published.

Thanks go to Jerry Coleby-Williams for drawing attention to the Danish botanist’s work at a later date and also to Jill Thurlow, librarian at the Herbarium, RBG Melbourne, for assistance in gathering the above information. Editor.
MAY
28 Sunday
Queensland
'Dakabin to Dayboro' - Driving tour visiting gardens, nursery and historic sites after meeting for morning tea at Wegner/Hesse home at Dakabin House. Contact: Wendy Lees (07) 3289 0280 or tallowwood@primus.com.au
Western Australia
Visit to Houghton’s winery.

JUNE
6 Tuesday
Victoria, South Yarra - 6.30pm
Book Launch in Mueller Hall - ‘La Trobe’s Jolimont - A Walk Around my Garden’. 8pm Winter Lecture 1 - Professor Rod Home, head of the team researching Ferdinand von Mueller and his work, will speak on ‘New Light on the Baron: Insights from Ferdinand von Mueller’s correspondence’. Lecture Cost: $15 members AGHS, $20 non-members. Contact: sandrapulilaman@hotmail.com

10-11 Saturday & Sunday
Queensland - ‘Weekend in Gympie’ - event includes visits to Carlton Hill Gardens restoration project, Gunabel Homestead and gardens as well as town walks to view other local features. Motel stay. Meet at Cooroy Botanic Gardens for lunch at noon. Contact: Wendy Lees (07) 3289 0280 or tallowwood@primus.com.au

17 Saturday
Southern Highlands, Burradoo
David Burke will present an illustrated lecture on the Railway Garden Movement. Bookings essential. Contact: cwebb@cwebb.com.au

29 Thursday
South Australia
Illustrated talk on ‘The Garden Heritage of China’ by Trevor Nottle and Merilyn Kuchel.

JULY
1 Saturday
Queensland
2pm Lecture on Georgiana Molloy by Susanna de Vries-Evans at Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens. Contact: Wendy Lees (07) 3289 0280 or tallowwood@primus.com.au

13 Thursday
Victoria, South Yarra
8pm in Mueller Hall, Winter Lecture 2 - Dr Paul Fox will speak on ‘Plants and People’ explaining what inspired him to write the stories of the six gardeners featured in his book Clearings. Cost: $15 members AGHS, $20 non-members. Contact Pamela Jellie on pjellie@hotmail.com

17 Saturday
Southern Highlands, Burradoo
William Robinson’s former home’ by Leigh Stone-Herbert who now owns the property. $10 for visitors/free for members. Enquiries: Stuart Read (02) 9873 8554 or stuart1962@bigpond.com.au

19 Sunday
Southern Highlands
10am Visit to NSW Historic Houses Trust Library at The Mint, 10 Macquarie Street, Sydney. Tour of library and conservation resource centre with Megan Martin. Enquiries: Chris Webb (02) 4861 4599 or cwebb@cwebb.com.au

29 Saturday & 30 Sunday
Victoria, Castlemaine
AGM & Winter Lecture by Genevieve Jacobs ‘Australian Artists and their Gardens’ followed by lunch and a garden visit.

22 Tuesday
Victoria, Melbourne
7.30pm AGM and 8pm Winter Lecture 3 by Professor Bill Kent ‘Gardens and Villas, Politics and Society, in Renaissance Italy’. Mueller Hall, Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra. Cost: $15 (members) AGHS, $20 (non-members) Contact: Shirley Goldsworthy on dsgoldsworthy@optusnet.com.au

AUGUST
1 Tuesday
Sydney & Northern NSW
6.00 for 6.30pm in Annie Wyatt Room, NSW National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill - AGM and illustrated talk ‘Gravetye Manor: Keeping History in Garden Design’

29 Saturday & 30 Sunday
Southern Highlands
2pm at Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney. 25th Anniversary Event: memorial tree planting at western side of Farm Cove, Lower Gardens. All AGHS members welcome. Enquiries: Stuart Read (02) 9873 8554 or stuart1962@bigpond.com.au

30 Sunday
Western Australia, Guildford
AGM and 25th Anniversary commemorative planting at Woodbridge.

OCTOBER
20-22 Friday to Sunday
South Australia, Adelaide
National Annual Conference ‘Keeping History in Garden Design’
‘Monuments missing from a landscape can be as significant as those erected’. 

So wrote Professor Ken Inglis in Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape. Here Michael Taffe, who is currently completing research for a thesis on aspects of Victoria’s Avenues of Honour 1916-1919, tells of two little known memorial plantings.

Following the ANZAC landings at Gallipoli the planting of Australia’s first Avenues of Honour commenced in 1916. The first of these in Victoria were at Eurack and Sassafras. Today these avenues highlight the Inglis observation. What remains of the Eurack Avenue of Honour is meticulously maintained, whereas that at Sassafras tends to be visually lost due to demographic change and the demands of heavy tourist traffic. To stand beside these trees is a moving experience and one that stirs me to ask the Australian Garden History Society to act for the preservation of these heritage memorial trees.

Eurack is in Victoria’s western district near Beeac, or for the highway traveller, near Colac, some would say a little off the beaten track. It was here that the first Avenue of Honour was planted in Victoria to recognise those local volunteers who enlisted to fight ‘For King and Country’ in World War I. The Eurack Avenue of Honour is an important item on our heritage landscape as it marks the start of a movement that saw hundreds of such avenues planted across this state and ultimately across Australia. The best known is the Lucas avenue that survives at Ballarat and that in turn, took its inspiration from another 1916 interstate initiative.

In response to the publicity being generated state-wide from Ballarat in relation to the Lucas avenue being the first, Pentreath’s wife Clara, took up the story in a letter written to the Melbourne Argus 27 April, 1918:

This Anzac avenue was planted in May 1916 (Arbor Day), by Lieutenant George Leigh Pentreath: M. C., who was then head teacher of that school, but who left in July 1916, to fight with, and for, the brave boys in whose names these trees were planted, thus being a living memory to our heroes. The tallest tree in this avenue was planted in memory of Kitchener.

Today these beautiful mature elms are uniform in height showing no distinction to rank.

Clara Pentreath also writes of the once beautiful avenue at Sassafras and its beginnings when a soldier was farwelled in July 1916. The avenue was originally planted with walnuts but due to their poor condition many were later replaced by flowering cherries.

Anzac Avenue on the Dandenong Tourist Road has almost lost its identity but the monument erected at its entrance records the names of those honoured and the number of the tree planted for each individual.

The Eurack Avenue of Honour originally had wooden blocks forming a cross with the names of those remembered on each. The Eurack Progress Association replaced these with the present cruciform cement blocks in the late 20th century. At least one tree has been removed from the western end.

Research into the history of Eurack, Sassafras and other early avenues of honour in Victoria is ongoing.

Michael Taffe is a member of the Victorian branch of AGHS and has majors in English and History. His cottage garden at Hymettus in Ballarat occupies his leisure time and is known to many members of AGHS.